



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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## **WSDA registering livestock premises in first step for national animal ID system**

**OLYMPIA** – Farmers, ranchers and other livestock facility owners can now sign up for a unique “premise identification number” for their livestock facilities through the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). Officials in the agency’s Animal Identification Program recently began registering livestock premises, identifying locations that manage or hold animals—an important first step to build a national animal identification system.

“The goal of the national system is to be able to trace everywhere an animal has been and to do that within 48 hours of a disease outbreak,” said Dr. Leonard Eldridge, state veterinarian.

The data will help identify animals that may have been exposed to a serious disease and where that exposure occurred. The information will be used by animal health officials to better manage and contain a situation that puts animal health at risk.

Animal health incidents can have large economic, human health or food safety impacts. The push for a national identification and tracking system accelerated after a Canadian-born cow with BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) was diagnosed in a Washington herd in 2003, the first case detected in the U.S.

Identifying premises where livestock animals are born, raised, fed, sold or handled anywhere in the production chain is a priority because it lays the foundation for a national system.

“Eventually, we will register all types of food animals, but for now the emphasis is on beef and dairy cattle, sheep, swine and poultry premises,” Eldridge said.

Farmers and ranchers receive a unique identification number for farms and other property where livestock are kept. The number is assigned to a location, similar to an address. Each state will be conducting the registration drive to build the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), which currently has no set deadline in place.

“Our own recent experiences tracking livestock movements for BSE and conducting surveillance for avian influenza near the Canadian border provide evidence of the importance of being able to quickly identify animals and premises,” Eldridge noted.

Washington is using a \$115,000 grant to start the registration process. A cooperative agreement with the USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service’s Veterinary Services supports premise registration efforts.

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“We plan to register some 6,000 or more animal premises with this first round of funding,” said Chris Spaulding, animal identification specialist. “We’ll apply for additional federal funds later this year to support the costs of registering additional livestock operations.”

The second phase of the national animal identification system —animal identification—may begin later this year. As part of the system, livestock, such as cattle, would be assigned an identification number. Once animals are identified, producers can report animal movements between premises.

Participation in premise registration is voluntary at this time, but eventually USDA may require premise and animal identification to ship beef and dairy livestock out of state.

“The industry is supportive of these efforts in part because effective management of a disease outbreak can minimize damage to animals, public health, the food supply and the economic health of the industries,” Spaulding said. “They also realize the premise registration and the animal ID and tracking system will help keep trade and markets moving.”

The livestock industry makes up a major component of Washington’s agricultural industry and has a grassroots stake in working to shape an effective premise and animal ID system that works for Pacific Northwest farmers and ranchers. Cattle and calves represent a \$475 million industry, while the dairy industry in Washington achieved an additional \$675 million value of production (farmgate value) in 2003.

Spaulding has been working closely with WSDA’s Livestock Identification Program, which registers brands and responds to livestock theft cases, and livestock industry groups to organize an animal premise registration system that works for government and producers. To schedule a presentation to learn more about premise ID efforts, contact Chris Spaulding at [nais@agr.wa.gov](mailto:nais@agr.wa.gov) or (360) 725-5493.

For more information, or to register your animal premise online, go to the WSDA Web site [www.agr.wa.gov](http://www.agr.wa.gov) and click on “Food & Animals.”

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**Note to editors:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service runs a comprehensive Web site to inform stakeholders about efforts to create a national animal identification effort. The Web site is available at <http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/index.shtml>.

In addition, the Northwest Pilot Project, a group of seven states involved in testing a process that will allow tracing livestock animals, has a Web site at <http://www.Northwestpilot.org>. Washington’s livestock industry is involved with the pilot project.